

6. USE OF CATTLE EGRET *BUBULCUS IBIS* ORGANS AS MEDICINE

On September 3, 1995, a person was caught capturing subadult chicks from the nests of Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* in a heronry, near my residence at Raipur, Madhya Pradesh. He had collected four chicks by climbing the trees. On interrogation, he revealed that the liver is taken out after killing the birds. This organ is dried, powdered and mixed with other ingredients to prepare medicine as a cure for asthma. Adult birds are also captured, but it is more difficult to

capture them and hence, collection of subadult birds from nests is preferred.

This is yet another instance of the killing of birds for medicinal purposes. The scientific basis for this practice needs to be ascertained to curb killing on this account.

March 22, 1996

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7. SIGHTINGS OF LESSER FLORICAN *SYPHEOTIDES INDICA* (J.F. MILLER) FROM MEDAK, ANDHRA PRADESH

The endemic and endangered lesser florican *Sypheotides indica* (J.F. Miller) is a rare bird in Andhra Pradesh, with barely a few sightings over a period of one hundred years (Sankaran *et al.* 1992). It has been reported in recent years from around Hyderabad city (Taher pers. comm.), Medak dist. (Taher 1984) and from Rollapadu Wildlife Sanctuary in Nellore dist. (Manakadan and Rahmani 1990, 1993; Sankaran and Manakadan 1990, Rao 1994). Andhra Pradesh is the southernmost Indian state where the Lesser Florican is found today. It is known to breed in Rollapadu Wildlife Sanctuary, during years of severe drought conditions in its traditional breeding grounds of Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh (Sankaran and Manakadan 1990). The precarious population level of this bustard in India, estimated at a mere 750 birds in 1989 (Sankaran *et al.* 1992) merits grave concern and should be viewed seriously by conservationists and wildlife planners in the country. Every record of the bird, whether new or a confirmation of existing data, is significant.

On March 31, 1997, an immature lesser florican was seen on the campus of ICRISAT Asia Center (17° 30' N, 78° 15' E), Patancheru, Medak dist., by a member of the Birdwatcher's

Society of Andhra Pradesh (C.T.H.). He was in a field of *bajra* (*Pennisetum glaucum*) at 1000 h, when the bird flew up and settled in an area of *jowar* (*Sorghum bicolor*), groundnut (*Arachis hypogea*), and chickpea (*Cicer arietinum*) fields some 150 m away. When informed of this sighting, we drove down to ICRISAT on the morning of April 6, 1997, to try to spot the bird and confirm it. After a brief search, we saw the bird fly up once again from a chickpea field in the same area! On attaining a height of c. 10 m, it turned in a wide semi-circle and disappeared to the west over some trees and buildings. As the bird rose, it hit an overhead wire, scattering a few feathers. It is pertinent to note here that in October 1984 (Taher pers. comm.), a female lesser florican was caught in a residential area of Hyderabad city in the evening, after it collided with an overhead wire and fell into the garden of a house, where it was rescued in the nick of time from the family dog!. This bird had a fresh injury on its breast, a horizontal bruise clearly a result of the collision. It was subsequently handed over to the Nehru Zoological Park authorities in Hyderabad, where it died a few days later. Do overhead wires pose a threat to this bird of open grasslands during its movements within the country?